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ABSTRACT

This document comprises three issues of a newsletter highlighting the MOST Initiative (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Appearing regularly in the newsletter are updates of after-school programs in Chicago, Seattle, and Boston. The January, 2000 issue features an interview with Institute staff exploring the concept of balanced programming in after-school programs. The November, 2000 issue features articles on building a stable high-quality after-school workforce, and the impact of quality advisors on staff retention. The 2001 issue provides an introduction followed by a spotlight on Boston, spotlight on Chicago, and spotlight on Seattle. The February, 2002 issue features an interview with a MOST project director reflecting on the initiative's progress from 1994-2002. (HTH)

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Spotlight on MOST, 2000-2002.

Brooke Harvey, Editor

MOST Initiative
The National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley College

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Volume 4, No. 1 January, 2000
Published by *The National Institute on Out-of-School Time* *Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College*

Spotlight on MOST

The MOST Initiative
Making the Most of Out-of-School Time
Supported by DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund

Exploring the Concept of Balanced Programming in After-School

The following is an interview with Ellen Gannett and David Alexander of the National Institute on Out-of-Schol Time (NIOST), which explores the concept of "balanced programming" in after-school programs. The increasing pressure on children to perform at higher academic standards has affected the way parents, policy makers, after-school practitioners and educators are viewing out-of-school time. "Balanced programming" in after-school means that the hours between two and six are viewed as a valuable block of time, full of the potential to engage children in enriching, educational and social experiences. Of course, within this framework each program will look different, depending on the resources and backgrounds of staff, needs and interests of children and families, community priorities and a host of other factors.

What is balanced programming and why is there so much discussion on the issue of academics in out-of-school time?

EG: There is increasing pressure for kids to do well, especially academically, and the extended opportunity to learn represented by out-of-school time is being recognized as important. I think most people would say that out-of-school time should not be more school, but should complement and supplement that experience. It should offer children opportunities to be successful, to practice and develop skills and to learn new things. The after-school program needs to be responsive to children's individual interests; there isn't one size fits all. Maybe "responsive" is a better word than "balanced."

DA: Balanced curriculum is present in a program when there is wide exposure to the content and possibilities of many new experiences and knowledge. After-school programs can provide kids exposure to neat and interesting experiences less available to them in the rest of their lives. I might call it "making the world more familiar." Programs would be balanced by giving children an opportunity to explore a wide range of experiences (physical, social, cognitive, etc.), or would be balanced if, for example, children developed a play, which included reading a book which became the basis of the plot, then developed a script, learned parts, built a set, wrote a program, created an ad, chose the lighting, etc. Many programs use both approaches to attaining balance.
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- New members to the NIOST team!
- New publication on literacy in school-age care
- New NIOST trainings

Spotlight on Seattle:

Linkages by Kathleen Groshong

My son, Ryan, has a Ph.D. (play hard and dunk) in basketball. He has earned his credentials through years of participation in elementary and middle school after-school programs. He has practiced for hours; followed guidance from caring coaches; sketched out basketball plays for his friends; read countless sports books; traded basketball cards; played sports-related board games and taught younger kids how to play.

In short, through his love for basketball he has developed kinesthetic, visual, spatial, linguistic and interpersonal intelligences. His reading, writing, math, critical analysis, communication and leadership skills have also been advanced through these activities. Would teachers consider these kinds of activities academic enrichment? Not necessarily. Would Ryan? Absolutely not; he's just having fun pursuing his passion.

And yet, these are all examples of play-based, experiential learning. Children learn all day long, in and out of school. Their learning is supported when their fundamental needs for security, caring relationships with adults and enriching activities are met. Quality school-age programming fulfills these needs, along with support for children's culture and language. Children also benefit from communication and caring relationships between school staff and program staff. While often serving the same children, schools and out-of-school-time programs typically work in isolation from each other.

The Seattle MOST Initiative is working to strengthen linkages between schools and out-of-school-time programs, in order to support children's whole development -emotional, social and academic. We believe that both systems play a role in supporting children's learning and development, and both have strengths to enhance each other. Here are some examples of linkages strategies:

School District Out-of-School Time Liaison

The Seattle School Superintendent recently appointed Donna Hudson, Elementary School Director, to serve as liaison to out-of-school time programs as part of her duties. Donna has been instrumental in opening dialogue with district administrators.

School District Learning Standards

The Seattle School District adopted district learning standards in summer, 1999. Thanks to Donna's leadership, school-age providers and School's Out Consortium/MOST staff were invited to teacher and principal training sessions on learning standards. The standards have also been distributed to all school-age providers.

While quality after-school programming should never be "school," there are many ways, that developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant programming directly and indirectly reinforces student achievement of learning standards. By informing the providers regarding learning standards, providers have the opportunity to support students' learning in intentional ways as they choose.

At the same time, programs have different missions and goals, as well as differences in resources, from those of schools. It is important to articulate these differences, while finding common ground for supporting each other. School's Out Consortium/MOST is convening a provider group to review the district learning standards and create a document to articulate to families and the school district how

out-of-school time programs can support learning standards while also providing opportunities for social and emotional development and asset building.

In a recent survey of 49 Seattle School District elementary school principals, 91 % of respondents reported that before- and after-school programs help children achieve learning standards through: providing students with stability and small group support; giving students a chance to practice skills such as problem solving and critical thinking in a "real life construct"; teaching social skills and discipline and reinforcing learning through creative, enriching activities. Some comments from principals: "Happier kids do better in school." Success breeds success. Some kids get success in things other than academics. A confident kid in one thing helps him be confident in other things."

Programs/Schools Linkages Teams

Six program and school teams were selected recently for two-year, $17,500 MOST grants to improve linkages between schools and out-of-school-time programs. Each team is developing an implementation plan to address the following outcomes:

For Schools and Out-of-School-Time Programs:

- Increased communication and cooperation among school and out-of-school-time staff;
- Increased ability of school and OST staff to jointly support individual children;
- Increased integration of school and OST learning topics; and
- Increased resource sharing.

For Children and Families:

- Increased social competencies for students;
- Increased cultural relevance of learning environments for students;
- Increased positive school-related behaviors, such as attendance, behavior, homework completion, attachment to school, interest in learning, family involvement in learning, interest in reading; and
- Increased family involvement.

Recreational Reading Curriculum & Training for Out-of-School Time Programs

The *Reading is Cool!*© curriculum and training was developed to help children improve their literacy skills and to enjoy reading by increasing their exposure to literacy-based activities, and expanding their access to culturally relevant literature. It also seeks to increase staff knowledge of literacy and literacy building activities and increase family involvement in literacy and in the out-of-school time program. An increasing number of programs are also offering homework support and/or tutoring, in response to parent requests.

To contact Seattle MOST, please call Adrienne Bloom: 206-323-2396 or e-mail abloom@ywcaworks.org.

Register NOW!
Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time: A Working Conference

Are there efforts to improve out-of-school time in your community, but no long-term consolidated plan? Join the MOST Initiative and other cities to learn how **your city** can develop a community-based, collaborative approach to support high quality, sustainable out-of-school time programs.

March 12-14, 2000
Babson College, Wellesley, MA

For more information, please call Brooke Harvey at 781-283-2556 or check the MOST pages of the NIOST web site.

Look for BIG changes to our web site in 2000!
http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC

To be alerted by email when the Executive Summary for the MOST Evaluation final report is available, please write to:
wrdf@wallacefunds.org.

Spotlight on Chicago: *Homework: Different Models for Different Needs.* *By Gregory Graham, The Chicago MOST Initiative*

The Chicago **MOST** Initiative works with a broad and diverse population of children and youth with a multitude of divergent needs and expectations. There are seventy-seven recognized neighborhoods in the city, each with its own economic, racial and cultural mix. In addition, the push within the **Chicago Public Schools** for improved academic achievement has greatly impacted the amount of homework children are receiving and the responsibility of after-school programs to assist in academic success. The approaches taken to effectively address the issue of homework in a school-age setting are as diverse and complex as the texture of the neighborhoods themselves. This article offers some examples of how after-school programs are approaching homework.

The **Chicago Park District** is currently operating 72 "Park Kids Programs" throughout the city. Each of the 72 programs has a special room or space called the "learning center" that is dedicated to homework. Each center is equipped with a library area, resource books as well as reference and reading materials. Children are scheduled on a daily basis to spend between 45 minutes to one hour in the center with specially trained homework staff who monitor and assist the children with all homework. Many of the programs are assisted by education students or connected with Future Teachers of America.

Located on the city's north side, **South East Asia Center** is a community-based organization serving a primarily Asian population. This tightly-knit community of new immigrants with little understanding of the American culture or the English language, has built a strong collaboration with their neighborhood public library. Children arrive at the library directly from the local schools where, with the assistance of bi-lingual staff, they begin homework as soon as they arrive. Access to all of the library's resources and services including the children's section (in this case with a wealth of culturally appropriate reading material) as well as computers, story time and other resource materials, make the library a supportive and enriching after-school space for children.

Erie Neighborhood House, on the City's West side, serves an at-risk, Latino population. The unique approach to homework at the Erie Neighborhood House is based on Lee Canter's Book, *Homework Without Tears,* in which Canter discusses the importance of creating a homework space and strategies for homework management. The program has a staffed learning center that is used exclusively for homework and rooted in a philosphy of cooperation. Ample resource materials, tables for two and a "homework" phone to call classmates for assistance, all encourage children to work collaborativley on homework. Placement of beanbags, couches and a loft also creates a climate for quiet study and reading. All children who attend the program are required to spend one of their four "choice" periods at the learning center. To assist children with time management, and to aid communication among teachers, Erie House staff and parents, a homework planner is given to each child to record homework assignments.

To contact Chicago MOST, please call Leonette Coates: 773-564-8872 or e-mail chgomost@interaccess.com

Spotlight on Boston: *4 Quality in Boston: An Out-of-School Time Initiative* *By Beth Langan, Parents United for Childcare*

In the spring of 1999, four Boston organizations came together to secure funding for and design an out-of-school time program quality improvement and enrichment initiative called 4 Quality. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), Parents United for Child Care (PUCC), the Boys & Girls Club of Boston (BGCB) and the YMCA of Greater Boston (YMCAGB) had worked together in various configurations before this project, but this was the first time all four organizations had joined in a common collaborative to create an initiative.

The initiative's structure includes a balance of research and development, training and technical assistance delivery and reflection and evaluation as a basis for planning next steps. This design allows the collaborative to draw on the strengths of each organization while working together to meet the challenges that confront the field as a whole, and also challenges specific to each organization.

The collaborative is currently half-way through the training and technical assistance component, which consists of 4 days of training, developed by NIOST, in collaboration with the planning team and a number of consultants. Staff teams from each of the five BGCB and from five YMCAGB, SACC sites attend this training along with their PUCC Quality Advisors and the members of the collaborative planning committee. The Quality Advisors continue to work with the staff team between the trainings to support their efforts via "homework" connected to the training content. The training is research-based and participatory (VERY hands on!). Designed to elicit and build on what participating staff know and do, this training includes components on thematic curriculum, homework assistance, literacy, science, and the arts. Participants also explore and articulate the ways in which the work they do with children is linked to learning standards from the out-of-school time (OST) field and beyond.

Thus far, the collaborative is well on its way to achieving a number of its goals including:

- An intensive review of standards and approaches to youth and school age child development to lay the ground work for a common language;
- Building of relationships to encourage and foster agency capacity building; and
- Development of a child-centered approach to OST activities that addresses all of each child's developmental needs, i.e. balanced programming.

Another outcome is the emergence of a system-level collaboration in which the four organizations have come to function as resources, support and planners to one another. This last development got a huge boost from the "literacy field trip" the planning committee took to New York in search of best practices. While our learning on the field trip was informative, the most palpable outcome of the field trip was the benefit of having spent 18 hours a day together two days in a row. This field trip proved to be a pressure cooker for the development of a truly democratic, fully-participatory planning process, which has enabled the planning committee to embark on ambitious and wide-ranging strategic sessions for both our current and our future work 4 Quality.

To contact Boston MOST, please call Beth Langan: 617-426-8288 or e-mail langan@pucc.com

(continued from page one)

Is the after-school curriculum agenda changing?

EG: The education reform agenda is bumping up against the child and youth development framework. Schools are increasingly being asked to evaluate their progress, effectiveness and ability against measurable gains in test scores and to be held accountable for these gains. This process is having a broad and significant influence on after-school programs. The educational reform movement is encouraging (and pushing) after-school programs to focus on educational outcomes. We expect to see varying levels of success as programs attempt to more deeply integrate academic subjects like math, science and reading while at the same time, striving to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of children. The successful programs will be the ones with well trained and supported staff who are aware of what is being taught in school and still understand the developmental needs of the young people with whom they work.

DA: The instruments for measuring the success of education reform happen to be achievement tests and school grades, so those are the things that are getting much of the attention. Many in the education field feel that this focus misses some of the most important attributes of a quality education, things like higher level thinking, ability to plan and follow through with a project, and so on. There is concern that when "high stakes testing" becomes the only factor considered in deciding whether a child will graduate from high school, the insights of teachers and other school personnel are being under valued. Some after-school practitioners have similar concerns, and don't feel that academic gains, as measured by grades and test scores, provide an accurate picture of their real accomplishments with kids.

How has the "trickle-down" of education reform affected the identity of after-school care?

DA: Part of the agenda for stakeholders in this field is to instruct out-of-school staff on how to participate in this reform and define what roles makes sense for after-school staff and programming and what roles do not make sense.

EG: The urgency about this issue is to send the message that after-school providers need to provide as rich a content menu as possible while paying attention to kids' individual learning needs and styles. There is a tension inherent for after-school programs in being defined by the education field if they have identified with another set of objectives, such as the school-age NSACA Quality Standards or youth development outcomes. I think the staff in after-school programs want to have roles that make sense in terms of what is appropriately and best delivered in the after-school environment.

What are the next steps for programs and staff of after-school programs?

EG: Finding opportunities to have dialogue with in-school professionals like teachers and guidance counselors, principals and curriculum developers gives us a wonderful opportunity to cross the boundary between the in-school time and out-of school time. As staff join in and explore mutual goals around individual children's growth and development, out-of-school time programs become less isolated as a field. Getting out into the community and letting people know what they do and how their work links to the educational goals of parents and teachers is a critical step in professionalizing the field.

Ellen Gannett is the Director of Training and David Alexander is a Project Associate, at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

Announcements

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time Welcomes George Daly, David Alexander and Robyn Silverman!

George Daly has joined NIOST as the new MOST Project Associate. George has thirteen years of experience working with and for urban youth and has researched, developed and taught curricula to children of all ages. Before joining MOST, George worked as a consultant providing trainings and technical assistance to after-school program administrators and support staff nationally.

David Alexander is the new Project Associate in NIOST's Training and Education Department. Before joining NIOST, David worked for the Boston Ballet's Center for Dance Education as an Education Advisor. Prior to his work for the Ballet, David spent 23 years as Lecturer and Director of the Evelyn G. Pitcher Curriculum Laboratory, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, at Tufts University.

Robyn Silverman is a third year doctoral student at The Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University. Her major concentration is the evaluation of after school programming especially as it pertains to school aged and adolescent girls' emotional, social, and personal development. She has joined the NIOST team to work with Beth Miller on outcomes measurement in out-of-school time with a focus on the three MOST cities.

New Publication from the MOST Initiative

"Literacy: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Learning In After-School Programs,"
by Kathryn Hynes, Susan O'Connor and An-Me Chung.
This paper explores different ways that after-school programs can support children's literacy development. Grounded in research, the paper includes information on how children learn to read, many strategies for promoting literacy skills and descriptions of model programs.
For ordering information, please contact Ruth Kropf at 781-283-2510

New training workshops for Winter 1999 and Spring 2000!

NIOST has developed and implemented model workshops meant to support and enhance quality improvement and enrichment efforts in out-of-school time. The workshops have been designed for front line staff and administrators in content areas that bridge school learning and child care issues.

- Supporting and Enabling Literacy Development in After-School Programs **NEW!**
- Arts as a Curriculum Activity Area. **NEW!**
- Standards for Learning
- Homework and Academic Assistance in After-School Programs
- Building and Using Thematically-Based Curriculum
- Implementing Science

If you are interested in learning more about our workshops or our Summer Session workshops, please contact Ellen Gannett or David Alexander at NIOST by calling 781-283-2547 or by e-mailing egannett@wellesley.edu or dalexand@wellesley.edu.

Wellesley College
National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Center for Research on Women
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time's (NIOST's) mission is to improve the quantity and quality of school-age child care programs nationally through collaborative work with communities, individuals and organizations, and to raise the level of public awareness about the importance of children's out-of-school time. NIOST concentrates its efforts in four primary areas—research, education and training, consultation, and program development.

Brooke Harvey, editor

Have a MOST-like initiative in your community? Interested in starting one up? Please talk to us about it -let's share ideas and collaborate!

Joyce Shortt, Director
MOST Initiative
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481
781-283-2526 FAX: 781-283-3657
E-mail jshortt@wellesley.edu

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Spotlight on MOST

Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time
at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time

Building A Stable High-Quality After-School Work Force

by Joyce Shortt, Director, MOST Initiative

The week of October 8th was proclaimed "After-School Week" by the President of the United States. The proclamation highlighted "Lights on After-School" as a national event where schools, community centers, museums, libraries and parks across the country hosted activities to inform families about the places currently open to children after school. The event also emphasized the need to provide additional places where children can participate in engaging, stimulating activities until parents return from work.

Program directors, who ten years ago could never have imagined such a declaration, are wondering how they will be able to meet the laudable goals of "Lights on After-School," when each day it is a challenge to recruit, train and retain quality staff. Providing young people with environments that are safe and stimulating, with challenging activities, and staffed with nurturing adults, *cannot* happen without a stable well-trained workforce.

> ***Lights On After-School***
> *" Schools, community centers, museums, libraries and parks across the country will host activities to inform families about the places currently open to children after school and the need to provide additional centers where children can participate in engaging, stimulating activities until parents return from work.*

What's the Problem?

Staffing after-school programs has always been difficult due to low salaries and the part-time nature of the work. In this strong economy, under-resourced after-school programs are having difficulty competing for workers. The rapid expansion of programming hosted by institutions that

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The Impact of Quality Advisors on Staff Retention

by George Daly, Project Associate MOST Initiative, NIOST

One program improvement strategy utilized by each of the MOST cities which can have a positive impact on staff retention is the use of Quality Advisors. These advisors, highly trained in program improvement, spend a prescribed amount of time observing programs and working with program staff, usually with site directors, to improve program quality. Quality Advisors have many roles. Among them are: coaching, mentoring, training, motivating, finding resources and helping to foster leadership development. Quality Advisors can also function as counselors, sounding-boards and trouble-shooters. By effectively performing these roles, Quality Advisors can help programs retain talented staff.

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Spotlight on Boston

Achieving Program Excellence: Linking Professional Development and Practice

by Tracy Breslin, Parents United for Child Care

Parents United for Child Care (PUCC) works with leaders and organizations across Massachusetts to establish a system of professional development that supports a stable and skilled workforce in Boston out-of-school time programs. This work is based on an extensive body of research that reveals that staff training and preparation improves program quality and, in turn, effects positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.

For the past several years, PUCC has worked with Bunker Hill Community College and the Child Care Careers Institute to develop and offer credit coursework for out-of-school time professionals. Funded by a Massachusetts Department of Education "Advancing the Field" grant, Achieving Program Excellence (APEX) is a professional development program designed to train practitioners working in school-age programs. This college-level certificate introduces students to issues in the areas of child and youth development, activity planning, supervision, administration, and family/community relations and enables students to earn college credit that can be applied towards an Associate's Degree.

Designed as a model scholarship program that offers comprehensive student support, APEX provides tuition, books, academic assessment and advice, tutoring, and career counseling. Furthermore, in order to enrich the college experience and support students in applying their learnings to practice, APEX has implemented innovative strategies including:

- Pairing Quality Advisors with students to enhance and extend students' learning and practice;
- Providing opportunities for students to develop leadership by participating in advocacy and other professional development experiences; and
- Linking coursework to practice by engaging students in program improvement through implementation of projects at their program sites.

These strategies have maximized the benefits of coursework for both participants and their worksites.

There are currently 21 students enrolled in the APEX program. Of these 21 participants, 13 have already completed the APEX certificate and are continuing their studies towards an Associate's Degree. An additional 6 students are within one course of APEX completion. Participant feedback reveals that:

- Students experience personal and professional growth as a result of their involvement in APEX;
- Students expand their knowledge and experience beyond their own programs and begin to view out-of-school time as a professional field;
- APEX provides a mechanism for students to establish and strengthen relationships with other out-of-school time providers, thus reducing their sense of isolation and increasing their sense of community; and
- Students identify support as the most important factor contributing to their success in APEX.

In addition, most students express a desire for out-of-school time programs to recognize and support their work in APEX and eventually link their education with increased compensation and career advancement. Several Boston programs are beginning to do exactly this; since beginning APEX, 10 students expanded their job responsibilities, 9 earned salary increases, and 7 received job promotions.

This past spring, PUCC designed an evaluative process to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the APEX model, identify the lessons learned, and recommend proposed changes and improvements for the program and other professional development initiatives. Three key findings emerged from this evaluation:

1. In order to adequately meet the needs of the out-of-school time workforce, training programs must incorporate a comprehensive system of student support that includes academic assistance, career counseling, and support networks;
2. In order for out-of-school time to be recognized as a profession, the field needs to establish a

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Spotlight on Chicago

Chicago MOST Tackles Staff Turnover

by Kathy Kloppenberg, Carole Robertson Center for Learning

Turnover of staff is a significant problem in the field of school-age programming. The field is moving toward increased expectations of quality services for children and families and, at the same time, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find and retain good staff who are qualified to meet those expectations. In Chicago, the following three examples highlight a variety of strategies that agencies have used to address the issue.

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning (CRCL), on Chicago's West Side, has combined part-time school-age positions with other part-time jobs in the agency to provide school-age staff with full-time employment and benefits. Curtis Peace, Site Director at CRCL, says, "Now that the field of school age care has expanded, staff have a lot of choices of where to work. If they are not comfortable, they tend to leave. But if an agency offers support, professional development, upward mobility and a comfortable environment where people can grow, then staff will stay."

Deborah Jaye is the Site Director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, Valentine-After School Program, an NSACA accredited School-Age Program. They are experiencing particular difficulty finding candidates for the Aide positions. These jobs are part-time and therefore do not pay well. In an effort to increase the aides' paychecks, Ms. Jaye offers her aides more hours by supplementing their work hours with training hours. The workload can become particularly challenging when one of these positions becomes vacant. She has been trying to hire a group work aide for the past 6 weeks and has not found a qualified candidate. This means that in addition to her full-time responsibilities as Director, she simultaneously fills the role of aide. Jaye stated that she will continue searching until she finds a candidate of the quality she demands for her program. In the meantime, The Boys and Girls Clubs has recently revised their salary scale in an effort to retain staff, and according to Jaye, that has been helpful.

The Chicago MOST Initiative offers a wide range of strategies that support program quality and staff retention. For example, MOST offers providers tuition reimbursement and a variety of free program improvement trainings; MOST works with local colleges to ensure that courses related to the school-age profession are offered; and grants are available to programs to make improvements and implement local program initiatives. All of these efforts combine with other MOST activities in an effort to support staff to make them feel valued and rewarded and provide opportunities they might not otherwise have. Greg Graham of Chicago MOST suggests that programs which are nurturing and supportive of their staff are the most successful in retaining staff. He says that those efforts which give staff "a sense of support, worth, value and reinforcement that they are doing quality work with children" seem to positively impact staff retention.

For more information about Chicago MOST please call Leonette Coates at (773) 564-8780

Achieving Program Excellence

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clearly defined, core knowledge base to promote professional standards and create an avenue toward increased recognition and respect. As this body of knowledge continues to be defined and developed, training curriculums must be revised to promote this knowledge base; and

3. In order to encourage individual practitioners to pursue professional development opportunities, additional training and education must link to increased compensation, career advancement, and recognition by the work site and greater out-of-school time field.

Using these lessons as a foundation for our work, PUCC will continue to collaborate with local and state partners to better address the professional development needs of out-of-school time providers in Boston and beyond.

For more information about Boston MOST, please call Beth Langan at (617) 426-8288 or e-mail langan@pucc.com.

Spotlight on Seattle

Seattle Area Projects Target Turnover

by Marty Jacobs, Project Lift-Off, City of Seattle, and Carina A. del Rosario, School's Out Consortium/Seattle MOST Initiative

After years of advocating and mobilizing, Seattle-area out-of-school time providers and early childhood educators are beginning to see concrete efforts to raise staff wages and reduce turnover. The Seattle MOST Initiative, through its lead agency, School's Out Consortium, is involved in a number of local and statewide staff turnover projects, primarily to ensure that issues unique to out-of-school time programs are considered in project design and implementation. The projects address factors that affect turnover — inadequate wages, benefits, working conditions and limited education — and aim to create change in the overall early childhood and out-of-school time care system.

Wage Initiatives

It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of these projects for out-of-school time care providers. Based on a full-time employment model, some of the enrollment requirements limit the participation of out-of-school time programs. Seattle MOST and School's Out Consortium will continue to work with the sponsors of current projects to address this issue through project evaluations and, if necessary, to propose pilots specifically designed for out-of-school time program settings.

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For more information about Seattle MOST, please call Adrienne Bloom at (206) 323-2396.

Building A Stable High-Quality

continued from page 1

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Programs in each of the MOST cities (Boston, Chicago and Seattle) are experiencing staffing shortages and, in some cases, true crises. Though funding may be available, staffing shortages prevent the formation of new, and the expansion of existing, programs. Personnel shortages have a huge impact on the quality of programs as well. Training, though more widely available than before, is often underutilized because thinly staffed programs cannot find substitutes to relieve line staff for training opportunities. Directors are hesitant to spend money on training staff because of high turnover. Though the field has a system of accreditation, and is developing credentials and other higher education opportunities, the ability of programs to participate is slowing down in the press of meeting immediate program needs.

> *The single most important determinant of school-age child care program quality is the presence of consistent, sensitive, well-trained and well-compensated care providers*
>
> Making Work Pay in the Child Care Industry. (1997) National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

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To assist with the increasing pressure on after-school programs to meet the needs of a variety of stakeholders, and to be experts at outcomes measurement, academics and balanced programming, OST programs could benefit from the use of a multi-disciplinary team. The team might include full-time staff and a variable short-term staff made up of adjunct instructors such as classroom teachers for homework assistance; specialists in curricular areas such as arts and recreation; social workers to help children/youth deal with emotional issues; and a committed volunteer staff such as Americorps.

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The Impact of Quality Advisors

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A major contributing factor to the high turnover rate is the quality of the work experience for staff. If the experience is negative--for example, when staff feel neglected, or are not given the opportunity to increase their skills, knowledge and resource base--they are not likely to stay. An unpleasant work experience, coupled with a small paycheck, can be enough to persuade a talented staff person to look for work in another field, or at least another site. A Quality Advisor, while not able to increase a paycheck, can greatly improve the quality of the work experience by being there for the director as someone who understands the complexities of running a program and is trained to discuss programming, administration or staffing issues. In addition, the Quality Advisor is there to bring in, or point the way to, much needed resources, and in many cases to provide training for the entire staff.

NIOST has developed the role of quality advisors over the past 10 years, originally as a complement to program improvement strategies. NIOST is now ready to build on these experiences and examine the benefits of using a systematic approach to increase the impact of quality advisors on programming for school-age youth.

For more information on the issue of building a stable out-of-school time workforce, please visit our web site: **www.niost.org**

More useful web sites:

www.ccw.org

www.outofschooltimecareers.com

www.usachildcare.org

www.afterschool.gov

www.bringingyourselftowork.com

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A Place of Their Own... is accompanied by an instructional book and training guide to walk you through the steps of space redesign. *$30.00 plus $8.00 S/H*

The MOST Initiative

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Quality Advisor Training: Learn how to help programs assess their strengths, develop improvement plans and to begin the process of accreditation.

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NIOST Summer Seminars

Boston, MA

July 9th-14th 2001

The Executive Summary of the Chapin Hall Center for Children's evaluation of the MOST Initiative will be available in December. If you would like to order a copy, please call 773-753-5900

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley College
Center for Research on Women
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481

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Fax: (781) 283-3657

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Spotlight on MOST
is edited by Brooke Harvey

What is the MOST Initiative?

In 1994, the Wallace-Readers' Digest Funds, in partnership with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), began funding the MOST Initiative in an effort to help make OST a community priority. Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time (MOST), employs a community-based, collaborative approach towards its mission of improving the quality and quantity of out-of-school services for children and youth, focusing on low-income families in Boston, Chicago and Seattle. This strategy is aimed at linking together stakeholders from all sectors in the community in order to develop the local capacity to provide leadership, resources and commitment to children's out-of-school time.

The goals of the initiative are two fold: to create a system of out-of-school time capable of identifying and meeting the needs of the families, children, youth and the programs that serve them, and, to develop an infrastructure capable of supporting and maintaining that system. By building partnerships and making links between existing institutions such as youth-and faith-based organizations, schools and libraries, the issue of out-of-school time becomes one in which the whole community is invested. As new relationships are formed, and as the infrastructure expands and strengthens, the community will then have increased commitment and capacity to conduct planning, form partnerships, and raise and expand resources to help all children access affordable, enriching opportunities during their out-of-school time.

Spotlight 2001

Introduction

Spotlight on Boston
Spotlight on Chicago
Spotlight on Seattle

Introduction
by Joyce Shortt, Director, MOST Initiative

The week of October 8th was proclaimed "After-School Week" by the President of the United States. The proclamation highlighted " Lights on After-School" as a national event where schools, community centers, museums, libraries and parks across the country hosted activities to inform families about the places currently open to children after school. The event also emphasized the need to provide additional places where children can participate in engaging, stimulating activities until parents return from work.

Program directors, who ten years ago could never have imagined such a declaration, are wondering how they will be able to meet the laudable goals of "Lights on After-School", when each day is a challenge to recruit, train and retain quality staff. Providing young people with environments that are safe and stimulating, with challenging activities and staffed with nurturing adults *cannot* happen without a stable well-trained workforce.

What's the Problem?

Staffing after-school programs has always been difficult, due to low salaries and the part-time nature of the work. In this strong economy, under-resourced after-school programs are having difficulty competing for workers. The rapid expansion of programming hosted by institutions that may be new to school-age care, such as:

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religious organizations, cultural institutions, park departments and libraries, in addition to schools and youth-serving agencies, means that there is increased competition for workers within the field. The demand for trained, qualified staff far exceeds the supply and all host institutions need an increasing level of training and support to staff the programs adequately.

Programs in each of the MOST cities (Boston, Chicago and Seattle) are experiencing staffing shortages and in some case, true crises. Though funding may be available, staffing shortages prevent the formation of new and the expansion of existing programs. Personnel shortages have a huge impact on the quality of programs as well. Training, though more widely available than before, is often under utilized because thinly staffed programs cannot find substitutes to relieve line staff for training opportunities. Directors are hesitant to spend money on training staff because of high turnover. Though the field has a system of accreditation and is developing credentials and other higher education opportunities, the ability of programs to participate is slowing down in the press of meeting immediate program needs.

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Spotlight on Boston:
Achieving Program Excellence: Linking Professional Development and Practice
By Tracy Breslin, Parents United for Child Care

Parents United for Child Care (PUCC) works with leaders and organizations

across Massachusetts to establish a system of professional development that supports a stable and skilled workforce in Boston out-of-school time programs. This work is based on an extensive body of research that reveals that staff training and preparation improves program quality and, in turn, effects positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.

For the past several years, PUCC has worked with Bunker Hill Community College and the Child Care Careers Institute to develop and offer credit coursework for out-of-school time professionals. Funded by a Massachusetts Department of Education "Advancing the Field" grant, Achieving Program Excellence (APEX) is a professional development program designed to train practitioners working in school-age programs. This college-level certificate introduces students to issues in the areas of child and youth development, activity planning, supervision, administration, and family/community relations and enables students to earn college credit that can be applied towards an Associate's Degree.

Designed as a model scholarship program that offers comprehensive student support, APEX provides tuition, books, academic assessment and advisement, tutoring, and career counseling. Furthermore, in order to enrich the college experience and support students in applying their learnings to practice, APEX has implemented innovative strategies including:

- Pairing Quality Advisors with students to enhance and extend students' learning and practice;
- Providing opportunities for students to develop leadership by participating in advocacy and other professional development experiences; and
- Linking coursework to practice by engaging students in program improvement through implementation of projects at their program sites.

These strategies have maximized the benefits of coursework for both participants and their worksites.

There are currently 21 students enrolled in the APEX program. Of these 21 participants, 13 have already completed the APEX certificate and are continuing their studies towards an Associate's Degree. An additional 6 students are within one course of APEX completion. Participant feedback reveals that:

- Students experience personal and professional growth as a result of their involvement in APEX;
- Students expand their knowledge and experience beyond their own programs and begin to view out-of-school time as a professional field;
- APEX provides a mechanism for students to establish and strengthen relationships with other out-of-school time providers, thus reducing their sense of isolation and increasing their sense of community;
- Students identify support as the most important factor contributing to their success in APEX.

In addition, most students express a desire for out-of-school time programs to recognize and support their work in APEX and eventually link their

education with increased compensation and career advancement. Several Boston programs are beginning to do exactly this; since beginning APEX, 10 students expanded their job responsibilities, 9 earned salary increases, and 7 received job promotions.

This past spring, PUCC designed an evaluative process to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the APEX model, identify the lessons learned, and recommend proposed changes and improvements for the program and other professional development initiatives. Three key findings emerged from this evaluation:

1. In order to adequately meet the needs of the out-of-school time workforce, training programs must incorporate a comprehensive system of student support that includes academic assistance, career counseling, and support networks;

2. In order for out-of-school time to be recognized as a profession, the field needs to establish a clearly defined, core knowledge base to promote professional standards and create an avenue toward increased recognition and respect. As this body of knowledge continues to be defined and developed, training curriculums must be revised to promote this knowledge base; and

3. In order to encourage individual practitioners to pursue professional development opportunities, additional training and education must link to increased compensation, career advancement, and recognition by the worksite and greater out-of-school time field.

Using these lessons as a foundation for our

work, PUCC will continue to collaborate with local and state partners to better address the professional development needs of out-of-school time providers in Boston and beyond.

For more information about Boston MOST, please call Beth Langan at (617) 426-8288 or e-mail langan@pucc.com.

Spotlight on Chicago:
Chicago MOST Tackles Staff Turnover, by Kathy Kloppenberg

Turnover of staff is a significant problem in the field of school-age programming. The field is moving toward increased expectations of quality services for children and families and at the same time, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find and retain good staff who are qualified to meet those expectations. In Chicago, the following three examples highlight a variety of strategies that agencies have used to address the issue.

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning (CRCL), on Chicago's West Side, has combined part-time school-age positions with other part-time jobs in the agency to provide school-age staff with full time employment and benefits. Curtis Peace, Site Director at CRCL, says, "now that the field of school age care has expanded, staff have a lot of choices of where to work. If they are not comfortable, they tend to leave. But if an agency offers support, professional development, upward mobility and a comfortable environment where people can grow, then staff will stay."

Deborah Jaye is the Site Director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, Valentine After School Program, an NSACA accredited School-Age Program. They are experiencing particular difficulty finding candidates for the Aide positions. These jobs are part-time and therefore do not pay well. In an effort to increase the Aides' paychecks, Ms. Jaye offers her Aides more hours by supplementing their work hours with training hours. The workload can become particularly challenging when one of these positions becomes vacant. She has been trying to hire

a group work Aide for the past 6 weeks and has not found a qualified candidate. This means that in addition to her full-time responsibilities as Director, she simultaneously fills the role of Aide. Jaye stated that she will continue searching until she finds a candidate of the quality she demands for her program. In the meantime, The Boys and Girls Clubs has recently revised their salary scale in an effort to retain staff, and according to Jaye, that has been helpful.

The Chicago MOST Initiative offers a wide range of strategies that support program quality and staff retention. For example, MOST offers to providers tuition reimbursement and a variety of free program improvement trainings; MOST works with local colleges to insure that courses related to the school-age profession are offered; and grants are available to programs to make improvements and implement local program initiatives. All of these efforts combine with other MOST activities, in an effort to support staff to make them feel valued and rewarded and provide opportunities they might not otherwise have. Greg Graham of Chicago MOST suggests that programs which are nurturing and supportive of their staff are the most successful in retaining staff. He says that those efforts which give staff "a sense of support, worth, value and reinforcement that they are doing quality work with children" seem to positively impact staff retention.

Spotlight on Seattle:
Seattle Area Projects Target Turnover
by Marty Jacobs, Project Lift-Off, City of Seattle, and Carina A. del Rosario, School's Out Consortium/Seattle MOST Initiative

After years of advocating and mobilizing, Seattle-area out-of-school time providers and early childhood educators are beginning to see concrete efforts to raise staff wages and reduce turnover. The Seattle MOST Initiative, through its lead agency, School's Out Consortium, is involved in a number of local and statewide staff turnover projects, primarily to ensure that issues unique to out-of-school time programs are considered in project design and implementation. The projects address factors that effect turnover -- inadequate wages, benefits, working conditions and limited education -- and aim

to create change in the overall early childhood and out-of-school time care system.

Wage Initiatives

It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of these projects for out-of-school time care providers. Based on an ECE model, some of the enrollment requirements limit the participation of out-of-school time programs. Seattle MOST and School's Out Consortium will continue to work with the sponsors of current projects to address this issue through project evaluations and, if necessary, to propose pilots specifically designed for out-of-school time program settings.

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National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley Centers for Women
106 Central St.
Wellesley, MA 02481
phone: 781/283/2547
fax: 781/283/3657
Questions about this site contact Webmaster

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Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College

Spotlight on MOST

Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time
at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time

The MOST Initiative is completing its seventh and final year of funding from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds (WRDF). We at NIOST are committed to a continued partnership with the three MOST cities: Boston, Chicago and Seattle. Though our formal relationship as grantees will draw to a close in January 2002, we are collectively entering a new phase of work that will focus on sharing our work with the out-of-school time (OST) community.

> *"One thing that we were able to do rather quickly with MOST was to coin the term "out-of-school time" (OST). By broadening the terminology, we were able to bring many more practitioners into the fold and then begin building a coordinated out-of-school time system"*

In the articles that follow, Joyce Shortt, Co-Director of NIOST, answers questions about MOST's impact on the field and the MOST cities describe how MOST has influenced out-of-school time in their cities and discuss the future direction of their organizations.

Looking back on MOST 1994-2002:

An interview with Joyce Shortt, MOST Project Director

Q: Why was MOST such an important initiative for the field?

MOST was a groundbreaking initiative for many reasons. Looking back, I have to commend WRDF for funding such a forward-thinking initiative at a time when very little national attention was being paid to the largely undeveloped and under-resourced field of after school. WRDF designed the initiative in collaboration with NIOST to provide Boston, Chicago and Seattle with a framework for building a comprehensive out-of-school time system and the resources to test out their ideas in a well-funded environment. The testing component was a unique aspect of the MOST process because it allowed the cities to learn from their experiences and make modifications along the way.

In 1994, it was a real jump for communities to organize around after school, as many had done for pre-school. After school was more complicated to organize because the field was comprised of so many different types of programs all working in relative isolation of one another: licensed, unlicensed, drop-in, kith and kin, and school-based.

Before MOST, little attention was paid to informal programs. Resource and Referral agencies only tracked licensed programs, but there were plenty of other activities available to kids that parents didn't know how to access. One thing that we were able to do rather quickly with MOST was to coin the term "out-of-school time" (OST). One of MOST's earliest achievements was the creation of databases in each MOST city that listed information on all school-age programs that fit within the parameters of out-of-school time. By broadening the terminology, we were able to bring many more practitioners into the fold and then begin building a coordinated out-of-school time system. Once programs were accounted for, communities could measure whether supply was meeting demand, children could have better access to opportunities;

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An interview with Joyce Shortt

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parents could ensure that certain basic standards for quality were being met, regardless if the program was in a school or community-based organization; practitioners could be reached and trained.

Q: What were the most significant results for kids, families and program staff?
Primarily, MOST was a vocal and successful advocate for improved access and quality to after school opportunities on behalf of kids and families. By bringing national attention to the issue and continuously working on a local level to increase the community investment in after school, MOST has made OST opportunities a more reliable resource for families in Boston, Chicago and Seattle.

MOST also had an enormous impact on after school program staff. Prior to MOST there was little or no venue for staff working in different types of OST programs to come together and see that they were doing similar work and serving similar kids. MOST helped to create strong practitioner communities that gave them a chance to connect with one another through conferences, associations and working groups. MOST also recognized the professionalism in their work by establishing consistent opportunities for training and creating programs to assist practitioners earn college credits and degrees.

MOST also brought practitioners in from the margins (church and small neighborhood programs) and provided them with access to resources. Prior to MOST, those programs were isolated within their neighborhoods with no connection to the larger OST field. MOST helped to legitimize their work by including them in the after school network, offering them access to training, grants, and participation in larger OST community activities. Children, youth and families indirectly benefited from this inclusion because as the practitioners' knowledge and competency increased, so did the quality of programs.

Q: How has the after school landscape changed?
Minority children accounted for 98% of growth in the child population in the 1990's, and programs need leaders and role models that reflect that diversity. As the United States continues to become more racially diverse, it is vital that the out-of-school time field focuses more attention on leadership development among minorities.

Across the country education reform efforts have invested millions of dollars to support the academic achievement of students and increasingly have enlisted out-of-school time programs as powerful partners in achieving these goals. However, this change in public policy, with its strong emphasis on standardized test scores, has virtually changed the landscape for OST programs overnight, creating a great deal of ambiguity around how after school programs can and should respond.

This issue of how to appropriately define what learning means in out-of-school time, and the role that programs can play in supporting learning, is of such critical importance to the field, that the National School-Age Care Alliance is dedicating their 2002 Leadership Day of their annual conference to the subject. Programs are desperate for guidance on how to appropriately meet increasing demands for academic outcomes while maintaining a program framework for enabling learning that reflects their core values, meets the needs of children and families and is accessible to and supportive of staff.

Q: What does the future hold for MOST?
As a team, we plan to play a pivotal role in helping to define learning in out-of-school time. Using our MOST work as a foundation for the future and in response to numerous inquiries from the field, we are in the process of creating a comprehensive tool called the *MOST Learning Kit*. The Kit will be comprised of sections on systems-building, curriculum, pedagogy, and staff training. It will also discuss how after school programs already provide children and youth with creative opportunities for learning and suggest a method for those programs to link their existing curriculum to academic goals where appropriate.

Annual Summer Seminars 2002

National Institute on Out-of-School Time

July 22-26, 2002

John Hancock Conference Center in Boston, MA

Seminar A: Effective Management in Out-of-School Time: A Directors' Retreat
Monday, July 22 at 8:30 AM to Wednesday, July 24 at 4:00 PM

Seminar B: Introductory Quality Advisor Training
Monday, July 22 at 8:30 AM to Wednesday, July 24 at NOON

Seminar C: ADVANCED Quality Advisor Training NEW this year!
Wednesday, July 24 at 1:00 PM to Friday, July 26 at 4:00 PM

Seminar D: Design-It! NEW this year!
A 2-day seminar conducted by EDC of Newton, MA in collaboration with NIOST: Thursday, July 25 at 8:30 AM to Friday, July 26 at 4:00 PM

Spotlight on Boston

Financing Out of School Time— Leveraging and Sustaining the Dollars

Elaine Fersh, former Executive Director of PUCC & Beth Langan, Asst. Dir. For OST Initiatives, PUCC

When PUCC launched the Boston School Age Child Care Project (BSACCP) -the precursor to MOST- in 1992, its primary activity was a strategy for access: the creation of the Affordability Grants Program, designed to increase low and moderate income families' access to out-of-school time (OST) programs in Boston.

In 1994, Boston successfully competed for a Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds MOST, *Making the Most of Out-of-School Time* initiative planning-year grant. This planning grant and the subsequent six-year implementation grant, accompanying capital improvements grant, and the millions of additional public and private dollars secured by the BSACCP/ MOST over the past seven years, propelled PUCC and its many partners into a much larger and broader arena: the issue to be addressed was no longer simply *access* but rather, *access to what*. The strategies to be developed and undertaken were not to be isolated and short-term, but *systemic* and *long-range*.

Clearly, with substantial new investments being made at the federal level, and by many cities and states, attention should be given to how to maintain the new programs seeded through these efforts.

Clearly, with substantial new investments being made at the federal level, and by many cities and states, attention should be given to how to maintain the new programs seeded through these efforts. Critical to maintaining both new and long-standing programs, though, is the unmet need for resources adequate to accomplish: the capacity to serve all children who wish to participate; access to affordable, high quality programs; professional development resources; wages that are commensurate with the expectations and demands of working with children and youth in OST programs; attractive and functional program spaces; and support of the additional components necessary at a local and statewide level to have an effective, ongoing delivery system. The work of the OST Finance Working Group and the report based on this work, the third strategy described below, addresses these critical sustainability issues.

PUCC launched the **Out-of-School Time Financing Initiative** in the fall of 1999, by convening a Working Group to consider options for long-term, stable funding for an OST system in Boston and throughout Massachusetts. The Working Group was composed of a variety of stakeholders, including parents, public school educators, OST providers, and representatives from health care, juvenile justice, business, child welfare, mental health, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

Over the course of a year and a half, the Working Group assessed supply and demand, analyzed current funding, developed a system for estimating annual costs per child, and researched financing options to address unmet needs for OST programming. This work resulted in a report, *Meeting the Challenge - Financing Out-of-School Time Programming in Boston and Massachusetts*, which included recommendations for funding and for action.

Outcomes: The report provides a comprehensive blueprint for how OST programs are currently funded, and how they should be funded to support high quality programming for children and youth. It includes a revealing look at the "gaps" that exist due to the instability of various funding streams and the paucity of dedicated resources; a guide to implications for future methods of funding; and recommendations on policy directions.

The gaps identified include:

- A "gap" of sometimes up to 43% that a program has to raise above the state's reimbursement for school-age slots to support high quality programming.
- A "gap" in program effectiveness because of a lack of financial stability that threatens staff retention and fiscal viability.
- A "gap" between the cost of high-quality programming and what families can afford to pay.
- A "gap" between the need for and predictability of philanthropic money.

As a result of the findings, PUCC has formulated

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Spotlight on Chicago

Links to the past and bridges to the future

Adam Alonso, Director, Illinois MOST

Since the beginning of the initiative, the success of Chicago MOST has been driven by its commitment and responsiveness to the community. MOST works closely with a broad range of community groups and other child- and youth serving agencies in order to maximize the out-of-school time benefits and services to children, families and program staff. A community governance structure that has provided a continuous planning and feedback loop to ensure responsiveness to community needs, has facilitated Chicago MOST's successful delivery of services and helped expand MOST's statewide reach through the development of the newly formed Illinois MOST. Below is a description of how Illinois MOST is currently responding to the needs of its community and its plans for the future.

Community Outreach

Community outreach began as an effective tool to link providers, schools, and school age programs in their community. MOST outreach activities have become a model of how community-based programs working together can leverage limited resources to increase cultural and social opportunities for low-income children and families. MOST created Neighborhood Networks as a means of connecting with its constituents around issues affecting children and youth and as a vehicle to share NSACA standards, grant opportunities, and link programs to resources and one another. Since then, MOST has partnered with Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS) YouthNets, a community-based model of collaboration that includes a broad-base of support from businesses, libraries, direct service providers, youth development programs, colleges, universities, and schools. MOST will further its original concept of building strong community leadership by conducting a new series of community trainings targeted to clusters with representatives from YouthNets, community-based organizations, schools and youth.

Program Improvement

Program improvement support has expanded from providing programs with short-term support to the development of a trained team of out-of-school time specialists that can provide long-term technical assistance to programs statewide. MOST uses a three-fold approach to teaching continuous program improvement: technical assistance, training, and grant assistance. Initially, programs were introduced to this approach through a training focused on accreditation called "First Steps: On the Path to Accreditation". After some experience, Illinois MOST recognized that not all programs were ready to make the first steps towards accreditation and that a pre-step was needed. Therefore, a new process was developed to introduce newly emerging or struggling programs to quality standards as a precursor to the accreditation process. This enhanced process provides increased training on the NSACA standards, technical assistance, incorporates frequent peer support meetings, grant assistance and resource development. MOST has strengthened its resolve to use the NSACA standards as the grounding for its training and outreach efforts based on the last 6 years of successful experiences. Building on this work MOST is now convening with partners that include CDHS, foundations, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to develop youth programs standards. MOST has been funded to assist CDHS delegate agencies with standards training, implementation, and evaluation.

Professional Development

Early school-age professional development activities consisted of trainings and conferences primarily geared to site-based school-age programs. Professional development opportunities now involve multiple training strategies and linkages to statewide resources. More than three years ago a task force comprised of steering committee members, community partners and program staff came together to develop out-of-school time training competencies. In the fall of 2001, MOST unveiled the culmination of that hard work: a series of trainings for new and seasoned out-of-school time staff and a course catalog. In order to meet the increased demand for trainings, MOST will recruit thirty new trainers who will train throughout the state on the competencies and other related topics. MOST will provide approximately 12 trainings per month and track practitioners' earned training hours and certificates in a database. Trainings will also be conducted in Spanish to meet Chicago's growing population of Latino providers. To ensure the broadest impact, MOST has partnered with seven new resource and referral agencies to provide trainings to providers who may work in centers or in home day care settings.

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Spotlight on Seattle

School's Out Washington

Adrienne Bloom, Community Innovations Director

When we launched MOST seven years ago, we felt as if we were the only game in town. A small band of individuals and organizations – each with different connections to out-of-school time programs – collectively dedicated to building a citywide support system to improve the quality, affordability, and availability of these programs for Seattle's young people. Responding to 6 months of community dialogue involving over 700 low-income youth and parents and guided by a 30-member community oversight group, these organizations set out to implement the community's ambitious Action Plan.

We began with an intuitive sense about why we needed to focus on a system-building approach, but we had great difficulty explaining it to others. We lacked the evidence of hard data to back up our understanding of the fragility of the field of out-of-school time (OST) programs. We knew inadequate funding for programs and support services was a root problem, but had not yet the luxury of uncovering the complexity of issues to be addressed. We had a sense of the systemic problems that programs faced, but not the resources to address them comprehensively. MOST allowed us to test promising solutions to these challenges.

MOST's approach brought together local leadership to jointly address systemic issues impacting the availability of quality OST programs for Seattle's young people.

Today, we have honed our technology for building this out-of-school time system at the community level and are leading statewide efforts to this end. In Seattle, MOST has leveraged more than $4 million to meet local OST needs. And we are not alone in our endeavors. Considerably influenced by MOST, there are many forums in our state where new players are leading and shaping the direction of OST care. Three prominent examples come to mind to illustrate the impact of Seattle MOST on our city and state:

Seattle Mayor and City Council's Project Lift-Off.

Seattle MOST created a focus on OST care in Seattle and demonstrated the viability of a unique approach to tackling affordability and access issues experienced by families seeking quality OST care. MOST's approach brought together local leadership to jointly address systemic issues impacting the availability of quality OST programs for Seattle's young people. Within this framework, MOST's partner agencies worked with OST providers to develop and test complementary strategies to address these systemic issues – the sum total effect would be build local capacity and maximize existing expertise and resources to achieve shared outcomes for OST care.

City of Seattle municipal leaders were strong partners in MOST from its inception. Building on their experience implementing MOST and the foundation MOST provided, they helped shape a new children and youth initiative born out of the Mayor and City Council's leadership – Project Lift-Off – which would focus on improving the quality and availability of early childhood education and OST care for Seattle's minors.

Lift-Off expanded the focus begun by MOST – and is evolving into a countywide effort. Lift-off deepened the engagement of business leaders, schools, government, and private funders in Seattle and King County to work together towards improving both early childhood education and OST care. MOST leadership continues to be integrally involved in shaping and implementing Project Lift-Off. Lift-Off's efforts are institutionalizing elements of the approach and successful strategies launched by MOST seven years ago. Lift-Off is also bringing more resources to this end: the City of Seattle's investment alone this year of $1.7 million for Lift-Off has leveraged $4.5 million thus far.

Seattle Public Schools' Alignment Initiative.

In 1998, Seattle MOST launched the Program/School Partnerships project to help OST programs and schools work jointly to support young people's learning. Each program/school team received funding to develop and implement a joint action plan. Prior to the Program/School Partnerships project it was common for school staff and program staff to have little contact with each other, even though OST programs are often located in school buildings. Through the Partnerships Project, OST

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Financing Out of School Time

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a comprehensive set of recommendations with regard to OST financing. Based on these findings and recommendations, PUCC is now working with other stakeholders and with legislative sponsors from the Commonwealth's House of Representatives and Senate to create a comprehensive bill that would create a statewide revenue stream for support of community level "infrastructure" and quality improvement needs with regard to OST programs.

Lessons Learned

In implementing these long-term, systemic strategies and achieving the outcomes articulated above, a number of lessons have been learned, many of which PUCC now shares as best practices:

- Providing concrete resources to programs, that support clearly articulated strategies and activities, is an effective way to assist programs in their efforts and build strong working relationships with them.
- The provision of resources can have additional positive consequences—e.g. providers receiving grants also received technical assistance around other aspects of their program's financial management or program improvement.
- Creating an intermediary organization that can leverage public and private dollars is highly effective.
- Most program directors are not trained in financial management, so that securing necessary program resources is only a part of the solution.
- While affordability grants increased access, they are also extremely beneficial to programs because they are a source of general operating dollars.
- When considering new financing approaches, be clear about whether the purposes and/or level of funding allocated can in fact achieve its purpose. For example, increased subsidies should be sought to increase access for low income families, but increased subsidy dollars do not support related start-up, supply-building activities, and/or program improvement strategies.
- Finally, the major lessons learned through the research and analysis conducted by the OST Finance Working Group suggest the adoption of the following key strategies:
  - **Align Strategies and Coordinate Resources:** Public funding streams designed to support comparable activities should be aligned to utilize the funds more effectively.
  - **Develop Stable, Long-Term Funding:** All public and private financing strategies should be guided by an intention to increase the stability and predictability of funding. In order to develop high quality, sustainable programming, providers cannot rely on one-time grants, pilot initiatives, or fluctuating revenues from subsidies, i.e. vouchers.
  - **Achieve an Adequate Supply of Programs:** Additional funding resources must be identified to ensure that a sufficient number of programs exists to meet the needs of all school-age children who would like to be enrolled in programming.
  - **Produce "the Glue that Binds it All Together:"** The best hope for ensuring program quality lies in the prospect of a major increase of attention and resources to the infrastructure requirements of a comprehensive OST system including: research and development; professional development; adequate compensation; program planning and start-up costs; evaluation; transportation; family support services; parent leadership; technical assistance to programs; and facilities-related costs.

New Perspectives on Compensation Strategies for the School Age Workforce

In this new research paper, we explore economic concepts as they relate to the out-of-school time field and describe compensation strategies and initiatives. We also profile out-of-school time compensation models and others from the early care and education field that could be adapted by out-of-school time advocates.

Available from NIOST in March 2002

Working Together for Children and Families: A Community's Guide to Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time

This guide draws on the experiences and reflections of the three MOST cities and NIOST as its national intermediary, to share with readers the MOST Initiative's unique approach to building a community-based, collaborative out-of-school time system.

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Links to the Past

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In addition, MOST is responding to the need for more specialized trainings by offering a set of workshops for Teen REACH programs. Teen REACH is a state initiative that funds community-based programs for high risk children and youth. These workshops are facilitated by clinical social workers to better equip group workers with tools in dealing with children and youth facing difficult situations.

Responding to the needs

MOST has become a permanent program of the Day Care Action Council of Illinois, a non-profit agency that provides a statewide focus and a strong public policy voice on behalf of children and youth in the state of Illinois. To assist with this transition and to become more responsive to the range of statewide needs, three tasks forces have been developed to represent the issues in the forefront for children, youth and providers in the state: *Youth:* expands the focus of MOST to include young people of school age, from elementary through high school; *Education*, connects with schools and further explores and defines what learning is in out-of-school time programs; and *Transition;* sustaining a governance structure that stays responsive to the mission and goals of MOST while expanding the service area.

In order to make MOST a viable program in the years ahead, it will continue to forge new partnerships, identify needs, and strategically plan in an effort to positively impact the out-of-school time field.

Schools Out Washington

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programs and schools discovered innovative ways to support and strengthen each other's work. One team agreed upon consistent standards of behavior for children in school and in the OST program. Another created a new liaison position between the school and OST program. All are institutionalizing new systems of communication and coordination between school and programs.

Building on their experience with the Program/School Partnerships Project, Seattle Public Schools is instituting a new policy to help maximize children's learning and success by partnering more closely with school-based OST programs. This effort – the Seattle Public Schools Alignment Project – aims to reinforce positive provider/school relationships in all elementary and middle schools by offering rent-free leases to all school-based OST programs. In exchange, programs are asked to demonstrate how their programs will intentionally support students' meeting or exceeding academic standards created by the Seattle School district. Programs work with their school's principal to draw up partnership plans outlining how they will work together and share information and resources to this end. The MOST Program/School Partnerships Project set the stage for how schools and programs can work together to create complementary learning environments for young people without creating the experience of more classroom learning for children after-school. The Partnership Project paved the way for Seattle programs and schools to tackle the task of aligning OST activities with academic standards in a way which maximizes their distinctive learning approaches without compromising their integrity.

Washington Regional Action Project.

MOST's longevity and cross-city exchange enabled its leadership to crystallize its understanding of the components of the OST system and effective strategies for ensuring these are in place and working effectively. Joined by local and state organizations, School's Out Washington took this work one step further and facilitated the development of system outcomes as benchmarks and measurements for this work. As the MOST model became more fully developed, School's Out decided to replicate it statewide to test its effectiveness in rural communities and created – Washington Regional Action Project (WRAP).

WRAP is a network of agencies across the state who work together to improve the quality and availability of OST programs statewide. Each of the six WRAP regions across the state conduct community planning meetings to identify and address OST care needs; provide training and technical assistance in OST programs; and educate community leaders to build public support for OST care issues. WRAP specialists work closely with state Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. Recognition of WRAP's effectiveness has led to funding through Washington's Federal Child Care Development Funds allocation within the 4% quality set aside; WRAP is currently not subject to participation in a competitive process for these funds. WRAP's success suggests that the MOST model can work effectively in rural areas. WRAP has expanded the local system of support created by MOST into a burgeoning statewide infrastructure for addressing systemic OST care issues.

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley College
Center for Research on Women
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481
www.niost.org
Phone: (781) 283-2547
Fax: (781) 283-3657

Spotlight on MOST
is edited by Brooke Harvey

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Out-of-School Time Programs: Links to Learning

A new video from NIOST

This video, aimed at practitioners and policy makers, delivers a simple, clear message about the unique role after-school programs play in supporting children's learning and development. Interviews with national researchers and community leaders make convincing arguments that high quality after-school programs can provide opportunities for learning that are broader than academics alone. The video illustrates a variety of programs that exemplify the skills outlined in *The Basic Skills for the New Economy* (Murnane and Levy). These skills, serving as a framework for promoting an experiential approach to learning, include:

- Literacy and numeracy
- Written and oral communication skills
- Problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Knowledge of and comfort with technology
- Ability to work with diverse groups of people

Check out NIOST's other videos:

A Place of Their Own: Designing Quality Space for Out of School Time, (2000) Video. This video and the accompanying implementation guide, demonstrate effective strategies for planning and designing quality space for out-of-school time programs. Offered at the new lower price of $15.00

***Making the MOST of Out-of-School Time: The Human Side of Quality* (1998)**
This video portrays the importance of the relationships that children develop in out-of-school time programs. The quality of programs is directly linked to the quality of the staff, and to their ability to support children's social and emotional health.

$10.00

Order by calling 781-283-2510

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